

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Debating the League of Nations

- Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices
- Grade Level: 9–12
- Objectives: The student will:
- Determine reasons for supporting or condemning the League of Nations
 - Practice debating skills in a classroom setting
 - Apply information about individuals involved in the League debate to a classroom scenario
 - Comprehend how a treaty is handled in the U.S. Senate
- Time: 2–3 class periods
- Materials: Documents: **1919** *Wilson Appeals for League Support*
1919 *The Reservations of Senator Lodge*
1919 *Senate Debate on the League of Nations*
1919 *Covenant of the League of Nations*
- Resources: *Explanation of Debate Format*
- Exercises: *Debate Evaluation*
- Access to the Internet:
- Biography of Woodrow Wilson
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/woodrowwilson>
 - Biography of Henry Cabot Lodge
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wilson/peopleevents/p_lodge.html
 - Biography of William Borah
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Borah
 - Article: The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations
<http://www.ushistory.org/us/45d.asp>
 - Article: The Senate and Ratification
(Explains Supporters, Reservationists, and Irreconcilables)
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1338.html>
- Procedures:

Pre-Activity

1. Students will work in groups with copies of the documents.
2. The teacher should make enough copies of *Wilson Appeals for League Support*, *The Reservations of Senator Lodge*, and the *Senate Debate on the League of Nations* for each student. One copy of the *Covenant of the League of Nations* for each group will be sufficient.

Preparing for the Debate, Day 1

1. Create these groups:
 - a. Debaters: Two groups with three students in each; one group will be **Pro** League of Nations and the other, **Con**. These students will participate in the debate in front of the class.
 - b. Advisers/Briefers: Two groups of 4-5 students in each to read *Wilson Appeals for League Support* and identify his main arguments. They will share their findings with the **Pro** League of Nations debaters.
 - c. Advisers/Briefers: Two groups of 4-5 students each to read *The Reservations of Senator Lodge* and the *Senate Debate on the League of Nations* and identify the main arguments against the League. They will share their findings with the **Con** League of Nations debaters.
 - d. Background Briefers: One group of 4-5 students to research and provide background information about the League of Nations and the key individuals involved in the debates about its acceptance. They will share their information with both Pro and Con debaters.
2. Allow time for all students to read the documents, highlighting and identifying the arguments presented by Wilson, Lodge, and the other senators.
3. The Background Briefers should have online access to find their information. Sites are suggested in Resources Section of Lesson.
4. Additional work could be completed at home if time constraints are a factor in the classroom.

Preparing for the Debate, Day 2 and Debate

1. Have Advisers/Briefers share their information with the corresponding debate team. Debaters should be finalizing the main arguments they will use in the debate.
2. The Background Briefers should present their information to the entire class, rather than moving from group to group to share.
3. Explanation of Debate Format:
 - a. Provide students with resource, *Explanation of Debate Format* and the exercise, *Debate Evaluation*.

- b.** Explain that once the debate begins, the remainder of the students will become judges or evaluators of the debate.
 - c.** Explain that Speakers 1 and 2 represent each side by providing introductory remarks. Support arguments with evidence when necessary. This is when ALL arguments MUST be presented. These speakers provide the foundation for the remainder of the debate. Arguments presented in later speeches are NOT valid in scoring the debate. Each speaker is allotted 5 minutes.
 - d.** Speakers 3 and 4 present rebuttal arguments. They must listen and record the arguments presented by Speakers 1 and 2. Before rebuttal begins, allow speakers 3 and 4 a maximum of three minutes to gather their thoughts and consult with their partners. *Reminder: no new arguments.* Each speaker is allotted 5 minutes.
 - e.** Closing remarks may be delivered by either speaker. This is when the main arguments are reiterated for the judges and the weaknesses of opponents' arguments are emphasized. No new arguments are permitted. Each speaker is allotted 2-3 minutes.
 - f.** Teacher and students should use the Evaluation of Debate form during the debate. Prior to the introductory speeches, explain the form to students.
 - g.** Tally evaluation sheets to determine winning side—Pro or Con.
- 4.** Explanation of Debate Evaluation Form
- a.** As Speakers 1 and 2 present their arguments, students should list these arguments in the spaces provided. Listen carefully to identify specific arguments. Each argument can be numbered. When Speaker 3 offers the rebuttal to Speaker 1, list the arguments and then draw arrows from these arguments to ones presented by Speaker 1. If Speaker 3 (and Speaker 4) do not address all the arguments presented, the score for their respective sides will be low. A debate is won by the side that best presents valid arguments and counters arguments presented by its opponents.
- 5.** Debriefing the Debate:
- a.** Discuss the main points presented by Woodrow Wilson, Henry Cabot Lodge, and the other senators.
 - b.** About which topic(s) are Wilson and Lodge most passionate?
 - c.** What could Wilson have done differently to gain approval of U.S. entry into the League of Nations?
 - d.** Poll the class to see how each of them would have voted if they had been in the U.S. Senate. Discuss the results of the poll. ■